



Alexander the Great was born the son of Macedonia's king, Philip II. Philip was a strong leader who used fear and threats to rise to power. While in power, Philip created a professional army that fought year-round. The army stopped any rebellions or revolts that challenged the king's power. Macedonia had fought numerous wars in the recent past and Philip created a new military formation, the phalanx, to make them more successful. The phalanx required soldiers to stay in a rectangular formation and use long spears to keep the enemy over 10 feet away. Other soldiers carried shields to cover the troops in the front, creating a wall like defense for the phalanx. This unit helped Philip to invade into Asia and attack his hated Persian enemies; however, he died before he could experience success. His son Alexander inherited the government, the military and the title of Macedonia's king – all before his 20th birthday.

Alexander's home nation of Macedonia was growing into a regional power. By the time



Alexander became king; Macedonia had access to both the Adriatic and Aegean Seas and was pushing further toward the Black Sea in the east. Greece had been conquered by Alexander's father, Philip II, and was helpful in gaining soldiers for the military and producing food and luxury items such as olive oil. Although Macedonia and Greece had been defeated by the Persians a generation earlier, Persia had removed almost all of its leaders and troops from the region. This allowed Alexander's father to plan an invasion without having to constantly fearing an attack by his enemies.



It was unclear that Macedonia would eventually become an empire that would dominate Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. However, Alexander's personal drive to finish his father's dream of invading Persia and protecting the Macedonians from any future threat of being attacked was a clear goal. When Alexander was a child, he was obsessed with the Greek hero Achilles and his bravery in the Trojan wars. Also, Alexander's mother claimed that she was seduced by the god Zeus and Alexander was part god and part human. This gave Alexander the belief that he was destined to elevate his people through his individual successes on the battlefield. This might explain why Alexander developed such a desire for gold, adventure and the crushing of his Persian enemies. Alexander dreamt of foreign lands full of massive riches and a world ocean beyond the nations of Asia where mythical kingdoms were located. Whether for personal wealth, Macedonian security or divine destiny, Alexander was inspired to pursue greatness.

At the height of Alexander's empire, his power extended over much of the known world. Over 2 million square miles of



Europe, Asia and Africa were under his rule.

Because of the size of his empire, cultural diffusion occurred on a massive scale. Long distance trade opened markets to new and exotic products and ideas. Hellenistic culture became the name of the new Greek culture that was influenced by the traditions of India, Egypt, and Persia.

Across this massive empire new, modern cities were built in honor of Alexander.

Improvements such as: roads, bridges, walls, harbors and grain silos were common and great amounts of money were used to improve government and education. The Egyptians honored Alexander as a pharaoh or living god-king and his rules were obeyed peacefully and universally.

As Alexander's success continued to grow,
he dreamt of conquering all of Asia.

However, his usually loyal troops refused to
continue conquering past India because



they hadn't been home in over a decade.

Unable to motivate his troops, Alexander
split his forces and began the several
thousand mile march home to Macedonia.

On this voyage home, Alexander became
extremely ill, most likely Malaria, and was
forced to stop for medical attention. His
illness would eventually take his life but not
before his generals could consult him
regarding the future of the empire.

Alexander refused to name a successor or
replacement, instead he remarked, "only
the strongest shall rule my realm." This
vague answer confused his generals and
upon Alexander's death, they begin fighting
amongst themselves until full-scale civil war
broke out. Ultimately, the empire was
divided by these wars and the vast wealth
Alexander had gained was wasted and
spent away.